



THE BUS

Comes Back

TO

Broadway

59TH ST.



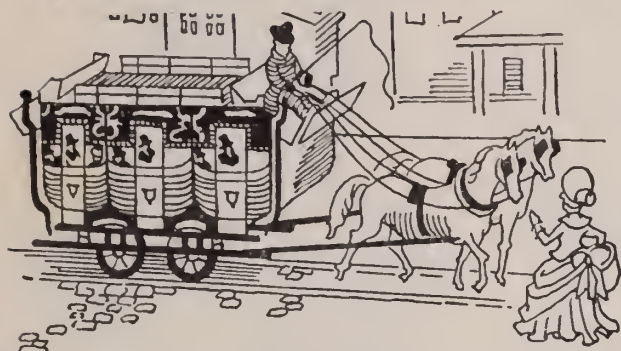
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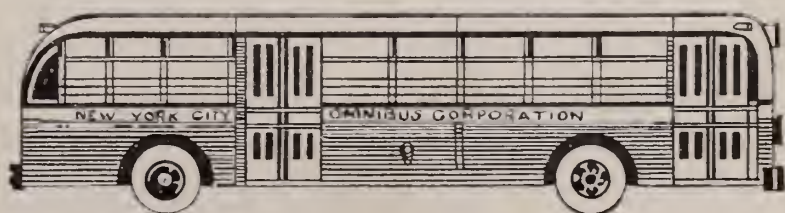
The bus comes back to Broadway



AFTER a lapse of fifty years, buses are coming back to the Great Public Road where they were operated for close to a century. Not the same type of vehicle, of course, which made its last trip on the world-famous thoroughfare on June 20, 1885, but a 1936 interpretation of the stage coach, motor-driven and equipped to solve the modern problems of mass transportation.

The horse-drawn bus once surrendered to the horse car on Broadway; now the gasoline motor coach is displacing the electrically-driven street car there. The route followed will be that of the present Broadway-Seventh Avenue Line, starting at South Ferry and terminating at Central Park South and Seventh Avenue, together with an extension west on 55th Street and north to the present terminus of the Columbus-Lenox Avenue street car line at 146th Street and Lenox Avenue, a total distance of nearly eleven miles.

The Broadway line will be a part of the New York City Omnibus Corporation's borough-wide system, consisting of seven longitudinal and nine crosstown routes. Buses are now running on Madison, Eighth and Ninth avenues and will soon be operated on the other lines.





CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

February 3, 1936.

Mr. Hugh Sheeran,
New York Railways,
123 West 146th Street,
New York City.

Dear Mr. Sheeran:

There will be many changes for the better in New York City this year but I venture to predict that few will be more welcome than the substitution of buses for trolley cars on the Broadway-Seventh Avenue Line.

More than fifteen years ago when I was President of the Board of Aldermen, I advocated the substitution of buses for trolley cars and the fact that the city is now, with the helpful cooperation of your company, reaching the point where soon its main thoroughfares will have thoroughly modern buses replacing antiquated trolleys gives me a great deal of personal satisfaction.

You have now been operating the Fourth and Madison Avenue Bus lines as well as the Eighth and Ninth Avenue Lines for some time. I am sure you will agree with me that bus operation in place of trolleys is not only a boon to the citizenry of New York in that it provides faster, more flexible and more comfortable transportation but also brings with it many other gratifying attributes. It reduces noise, keeps traffic moving faster, and eliminates the dangers of wet rails when weather is bad.

Madison Avenue, since the substitution of buses for trolleys, has become one of the show boulevards of the world. Real estate values have been enhanced and no one is mourning the passing of the street car.

What has happened on Madison Avenue will happen in varying degrees wherever buses take the place of trolley cars. I therefore whole-heartedly extend to you and your company my congratulations upon reaching another auspicious milestone in modern transportation, in replacing street cars by buses on the Broadway and Seventh Avenue Line.

Sincerely yours,

F.H. LaGuardia,
M a y o r .



"The Broadway bus line, inaugurated today, marks another milestone on the way to complete motorization of street car lines in Manhattan—a program which I have strongly championed since assuming public office in 1931.

"These handsome new buses will be a great accommodation to thousands of our citizens and visitors who pursue business or pleasurable activities along this thoroughfare. It is recognized by traffic authorities that the flexibility of movement of motor buses facilitates vehicular traffic movement generally and makes for the safety of those using these public conveyances, as they may be boarded directly at the sidewalk rather than from the middle of the roadway as in the case of the street cars. Moreover, the removal of the old car rails and replacement of the track area with new pavement will greatly enhance the appearance of Broadway; thus adding further prestige to New York's famous street of song and story."—SAMUEL LEVY, *President, Borough of Manhattan.*

"When motorization of the Surface Car Lines in the Borough of Manhattan first was broached, the Transit Commission apart from the purely and necessarily legal consideration of the general subject was particularly concerned with the possible effect of such a drastic change to the traveling public.

"We may safely say now in view of the experience that we have gained that the change has met with popular favor. Everything in the Borough of Manhattan seemingly contributes to an acceptance of this modern type of transportation. Statistics show a complete acceptance by the general public and their approval of the change. This having been accomplished, the Commission feels that its action has been a worthy one."—WILLIAM G. FULLEN, *Chairman Transit Commission.*



"On behalf of the Broadway Association and its allied civic relations within Manhattan, it is a pleasure to welcome the new motor coach service to Broadway.

"By the removal of the trolley car lines and the substitution of the flexible motor driven coach, you are making a distinct contribution to the free flow of traffic and the safety of the riding public.

"The Broadway Association bows its acknowledgments to the present administration of the City Government, for having accepted the exchange of franchises, and thus making possible the operation of modern motor coaches instead of the archaic trolley cars.

"The anticipation of this new surface transportation system during the past 15 years has commanded a widespread interest on the part of the civic life represented in the Broadway Association, and on this inaugural day our congratulations are extended to the president of the New York City Omnibus Corporation and his associates for having successfully mobilized your resources to render a public service worthy of Broadway and the great influence it represents."—DR. JOHN A. HARRISS, *President, Broadway Association.*





Bowling
Green
1831



Grace and
Trinity
Churches
Broadway
N. Y.
1820



Broadway
North from
Canal Street
Canal
Street
1834

The Street That "Just Happened"

Although sometimes described as the world's longest modern street, extending, as it does, from the tip of Manhattan Island northward as far as Albany, a distance of 150 miles, Broadway owes its renown principally to that portion which is embraced in the new motor coach route. That is the Broadway of history, legend and song.

To tell the story of Broadway in any detail would necessitate the writing of history, not only of New York, but of the nation, the arts and every social and material activity of our people during the past three hundred years. Yet this great avenue—a national highway in the truest sense—like most of the thoroughfares in lower Manhattan that originated during the period of Dutch occupation, "just happened."

Fear of the Indians and later of the British caused the rugged colonists who had been brought here by the Dutch West India Company to build their homes as near as possible to the fort, which stood in what is now Battery Park. That accounts for the irregular character of the streets and alleys south of Wall, the street that derived its name from the barricade erected there to guard against surprise attacks from the north.

Two roads ran through the little settlement. One, extending towards the eastern waterfront, is now Pearl Street. The other, known to the burghers as *De Heere Wagh Wegh* and the *Breedeweg*, which traversed the company's fields and farms to the north, was destined to become the city's great longitudinal artery.

The Trek Northward

The first habitation of a white man on Manhattan was built in 1613 by Adrian Block where 41 Broadway now stands. The colony was officially established in 1626 when Peter Minuit made his famous purchase of the island from the Indians, but for several years thereafter the Block home was on the northerly outskirts of the slowly-growing community. As late as 1664, when the English Admiral moved in and peg-legged Governor Peter Stuyvesant moved out, the town extended northward only 550 yards from the fort to the wall.

Even at that early date, however, the Broad Wagon Way was coming into its own in the matter of public esteem, for shortly before the English took possession, a strip of pebbles had been laid along its middle. That was a rare tribute for early Dutch and Walloon colonists to pay to a thoroughfare, since they seem to have sub-

scribed to the belief that it was the duty of roads to find, build and maintain themselves.

The English authorities eventually proved somewhat more civic-minded; they laid cobblestones from Bowling Green to Trinity Church in 1707 and five years later levelled the roadway to Maiden Lane. In 1790, seven years after the close of the Revolutionary War, the first brick sidewalks were laid, from Rector Street to City Hall.

As the town crept northward, Broadway pushed out ahead like an advance guard, holding its gains and consolidating its positions until the other streets and avenues were able to catch up. It was the first to be graded and paved, the first to be lighted, the first to be cleaned and the first to receive police protection.

In its northward trek, the historic parks and squares along the route seem to have served as temporary resting places from which the journey always was resumed. The *Breedeweg* of New Amsterdam was local to Bowling Green and its environs and during later colonial days the street was built up as far as the Common, now City Hall Park. Then, in the years following the Revolution, there was a surge of population that carried Broadway to Union Square, where, as we shall see, it nearly ended. Madison Square, Greeley and Herald Squares, Longacre (now Times) Square and later Central Park were boundaries that served for the time being to mark certain definite stages of the city's development. Once Broadway stretched beyond one of these squares, it never stopped until the next one was reached, where, perhaps it would again halt awhile and then go forward to fulfill its mission of bisecting the Island of Manhattan.

Municipal Improvements

When the colony was under Dutch rule, the inhabitants depended upon the moon and the stars for illumination at night. In 1679, however, the local authorities decreed that every seventh house on the main thoroughfare must display a lantern on a pole, the cost of maintenance to be borne by all. Then, as two and a half centuries later, Broadway was the Great White Way in comparison with adjacent streets.

The same year witnessed the formation of the original "Broadway Squad", consisting of two watchmen whose duty it was to patrol the avenue after dark.

The first public lamps and posts were installed in 1762. In the beginning the lamps apparently were lighted and cleaned by the residents, for it was not until 1774 that a force of lamplighters, sixteen in all, was employed.

The kerosene era on Broadway was ushered out with the organization of the Manhattan Gas Light Company, which in 1825 laid pipes on both sides of the thoroughfare from Canal Street south. Arc lights were introduced from 14th to 26th streets in 1880. Broadway, as befitted its importance, was always ahead of the rest of the city in the matter of illumination.

Each resident cleaned the roadway in front of his premises prior to 1696, when a contractor agreed to perform this work on Broadway for the sum of thirty pounds sterling per annum. Four years later there was enacted an ordinance which required each inhabitant to sweep the dirt in front of his home into piles every Friday and remove it the following day under penalty of a six shilling fine. This



(J. Clarence Davies Collection, Museum of the City of New York)

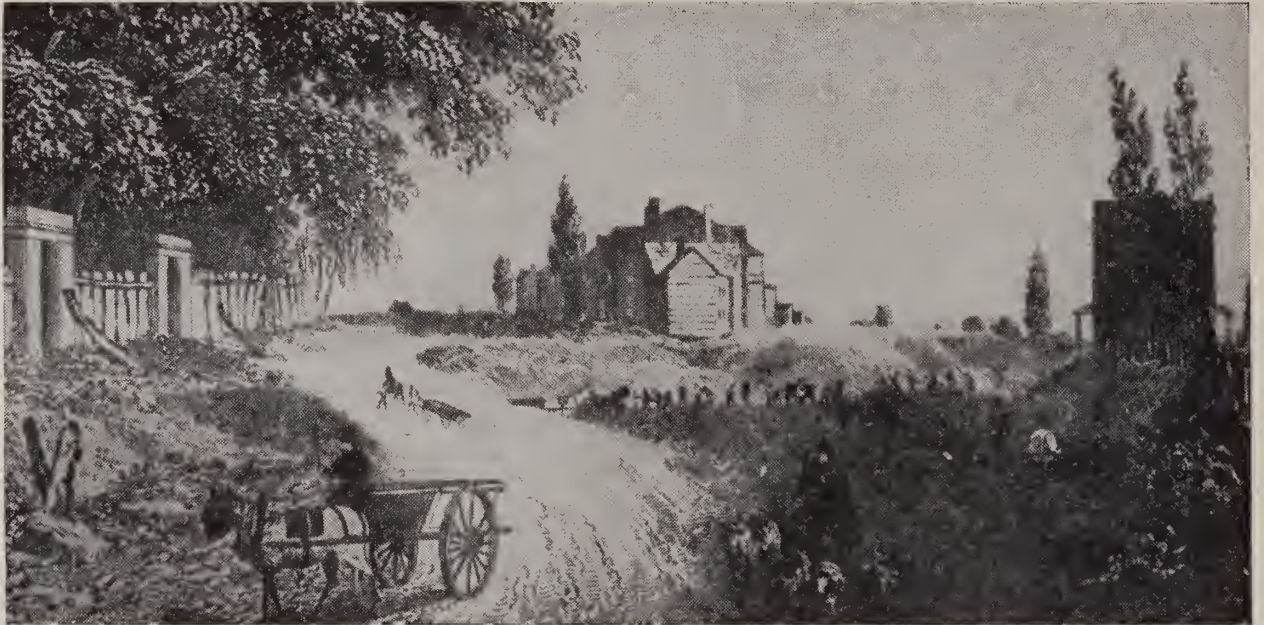
The Croton Celebration, City Hall Park, 1842

week-end sprucing up appears to have supplemented the work of the regular street cleaners.

The first recorded attempt at putting zoning restrictions into effect was made successfully in 1771, when the Oswego Market, which had stood in the center of the highway at Liberty Street for 32 years, was declared to be a public nuisance and torn down.

New York City's present water supply system, acknowledged to be the finest in the world, had its origin in 1842, when water was piped

into the city from Croton reservoir. Broadway, of course, was the first to get Croton water, which was welcomed by public officials, civic leaders and a large assemblage of citizens in gala mood when a highly decorative fountain erected for the occasion at the south end of City Hall Park was turned on. A parade in which the National Guard and volunteer fire companies participated was a feature of the celebration.



(Courtesy of Museum of the City of New York)

Where Broadway Almost Ended—Junction with the Bowery, Union Square, near 17th Street

Broadway in the Struggle for Liberty

Broadway was the scene of some of the most stirring events that occurred during the colonists' struggle for independence, which really commenced well in advance of the Battle of Lexington. In New York the Sons of Liberty, a society of patriotic and high-spirited youths, was organized in 1765 and kept up a campaign against British oppression which continued until the outbreak of hostilities ten years later and did much to arouse the patriotic fervor of their fellow citizens. Their blood was the first to be shed in the cause of liberty.

The original headquarters of this organization was located in Montagnie's Gardens at Broadway and Murray Street. From there its members marched to the Commons across the street and erected in the name of freedom the first Liberty Pole on June 4, 1766, on the spot where the Liberty Pole of New York was dedicated on Flag Day, 1921, and now stands. Several sanguinary struggles between the Sons of Liberty and the British soldiers occurred around this site prior to the Revolution. Frequently the soldiers were driven off, but

returning at night would demolish the pole, only to find a new one erected a few weeks later. This continued for years, until finally the Sons of Liberty, joined by nearly every male resident, marched on the commons and in a mighty demonstration, put up a huge pole, reinforced at its base, and announced that an armed guard would watch over it. The temper of the populace was such that the British authorities then issued orders that no further attempt was to be made to remove the pole, which stood until General Howe established his headquarters here following the battle of Long Island.

Shortly after the news of Lexington and Concord had reached New York, the handsome equestrian statue of King George III, which had stood in Bowling Green, was demolished by the citizens and melted into bullets for the poorly armed Continental Army.

The prime movers in the Sons of Liberty were Isaac Sears, Marinus Willett and Alec McDougall. One of their most brilliant exploits occurred on August 22, 1775, when with their followers and a band of students from King's College (now Columbia), headed by



(J. Clarence Davies Collection, Museum of the City of New York)

Early Broadway Buses—View from Junction of Broadway and Park Row

the youthful Alexander Hamilton, they marched upon the fort in Battery Park and under the guns of the British war ships stripped it of all its cannon which they dragged up Broadway to the Commons. In the exchange of shots between the raiding party and the war ships one British sailor was killed and several wounded and a few buildings in the vicinity of Battery Park were damaged.

On July 10, 1776, a great celebration occurred in the Commons, where General Washington and his staff, surrounded by troops drawn up in a hollow square and thousands of cheering citizens, listened for the first time to the reading of the Declaration of Independence.



Pedestrians Bridge Across Fulton Street—1867

In the retreat of Washington's Army after the battle of Long Island, many important rear guard engagements occurred on upper Broadway, especially on Washington Heights, where determined resistance enabled the main body of troops to escape. But it is lower Broadway with which we are now concerned, and the influence of these minor battles is well covered by military historians.

At the conclusion of peace and after the evacuation of New York by the British, Washington returned to bid farewell to his staff and later to assume the Presidency. On the site of the Custom House, facing Bowling Green and overlooking New York's beautiful bay, there was erected the Government House, intended for the use of

the President. Before its completion, the National Capital had been removed to Philadelphia, but the building subsequently served as the official residence of Governors Clinton and Jay.

Lower Broadway was then and for a long period following the War of the Revolution the city's most exclusive residential section. The Jays, DePeysters, Van Courtlandt's, Washington Irving, Alexander Hamilton and other notables maintained imposing homes in the Bowling Green section, and President Washington also resided there in the six-story McComb mansion during the brief period when New York City was the nation's capital.

Ending Broadway at the Tulip Tree

The streets in lower Manhattan were jumbled together in such haphazard fashion, that as the city began to extend northward civic leaders and public officials determined that a similar mistake should not be made in laying out the upper part of the town. Accordingly, in 1807 they applied to the State Legislature for authority to create what was probably the original city planning commission. In those days, before the State had delegated to municipalities many of the powers which the latter now possess, it was necessary to go to Albany when any municipal function out of the ordinary was contemplated.

The necessary authority was granted and a commission consisting of Simeon DeWitt, Gouverneur Morris and John Rutherford, with John Randall, Jr., as surveyor, was created. The commission, functioning for fourteen years, worked out a plan for the laying out of streets which not only corrected many of the earlier errors, but has been followed successfully ever since throughout the length of the island.

But the plan nearly resulted in ending Broadway at Union Square. The east side of New York was then several years ahead of the west side in development, and it was the general opinion that the main artery of the city north of Union Street, now 14th, would be the Boston Road. So it was proposed that Broadway should terminate "at the tulip tree" in Union Square, where it met the Bowery, and that the principal line of travel above that point should be the latter thoroughfare and Boston Road.

Fortunately for Broadway and the entire city, this plan was rejected by the Commission, and New York's great avenue was allowed to continue its natural diagonal course from the Battery to Spuyten Duyvil Creek.

The First Stage Coaches

During colonial days distances were short and there was little need for public transportation; indeed, even private equipages were so few in number that each was as easily identified as if it bore the owner's name. Even at funerals the body was borne through the streets by pallbearers, the mourners following afoot to the grave, usually a few blocks distant.

The first public transportation on Broadway either for passengers or freight was furnished by ox carts, about 1740; they wended their way occasionally from the Battery to the outskirts of the town at Houston Street. Later a foot post and a rider post were maintained between New York and Albany, and towards the close of the eighteenth century, when Broadway was slowly creeping northward, a few rickety public vehicles that had outlived their usefulness as private



The Canal That Flowed Under the Great Public Road

carriages began to be seen. Stage coaches appeared and an enterprising firm opened an office between Cedar and Liberty streets where bookings to points along the two post roads could be made.

In 1786 the Legislature granted to Isaac Van Wyck, Talmage Hall and John Kenny the exclusive right to "erect, set up, carry on and drive stage wagons" between New York and Albany on the east bank of the Hudson for a period of ten years, forbidding all competition under penalty of a fine of 200 pounds. The franchise pro-

vided that covered wagons and teams of four horses must be used, that trips must be made each week and that a fare of four pence per mile could be charged. The trip had to be made in two days during the summer season.

The stages first started from Courtlandt Street and turned into the Boston Road at Union Square, entering the Albany Post Road by way of Kingsbridge Road. That was the route usually followed by travellers leaving the city, as Bloomingdale Road, the continuation of Broadway, was almost impassable for wagons. In later years the terminus was moved north to 23rd Street.

Shorter Bus Routes Spring Up

Other and shorter stage routes began to spring up. One ran to Harlem shortly after the turn of the century; in 1816 a stage was operated from the Battery via Broadway to Greenwich, and three years later another from Bowling Green to Bloomingdale, a village on the upper west side. At first each the several lines was owned independently, but most of them were consolidated eventually by the firm of Kip & Brown. These operators appear to have enjoyed a large measure of popular esteem, for when their stables were burned down in 1848 a gala benefit performance was given for them at the original Broadway Theatre.

For city travel a few omnibuses of a somewhat smaller and lighter type were operated on shorter routes than those followed by the interurban stage coaches. The first bus of this type was run on Broadway from Bowling Green to Bleecker Street in 1830. If the weather was bad or a lady passenger remained aboard when the northern terminus was reached, the driver, who believed in furnishing service was a capital S, continued on as far as the Kip Mansion, near Waverly Place.

Other buses soon made their appearance, each elaborately decorated and named after some celebrity, either living or dead. Thus, Lady Washington, Lady Clinton, George Washington, DeWitt Clinton, Benjamin Franklin and other equally well known Americans could be seen daily on Broadway in vehicular form long after the distinguished persons from whom they derived their names had passed into eternity.

A Popular Service

The Broadway buses grew rapidly in public favor. Soon there were three lines run by Brown, Jones & Coleman, on which the fare

of one shilling was collected by a small boy who stood at the entrance. At first the entrance was on the side, but later was changed to the rear. Other lines in the city ran to Chelsea, Bloomingdale, Harlem and the shipbuilding section on the East River.

It was really quite a sight, according to commentators of the period, to see these highly embellished vehicles, each drawn by four matched horses, swinging up and down Broadway at what was then considered breakneck speed. The drivers, seated on their thrones atop the buses, were fully aware of the conspicuous part they played in the panorama of city life. There was great rivalry among them and, in order to establish himself as a fancy whip, each made it a point to exhibit his dexterity by avoiding accidents by the narrowest of margins. They were the forerunners and, perhaps, the forefathers of those present-day drivers who believe that a miss is as good as a mile.

Huge sleighs, drawn by four, six and even eight horses, replaced the buses during the winter season. No attempt was made to clear the roadway of snow, which frequently remained on the streets from early December until late in March. These public sleighs provided a popular and inexpensive form of diversion for the citizens, especially in the evenings, and the fact that passengers were the targets for snowballs along the route did not detract from the pleasure derived from the ride.

Traffic and Rapid Transit Panaceas

After the close of the Civil War, the city began to expand and lower Broadway became a crowded thoroughfare, even if judged by present day standards. Various expedients to relieve congestion and accelerate traffic were proposed. One that was adopted was the erection of the Loew pedestrian bridge over Broadway at Fulton Street in 1867. It proved to be more of a hindrance than a help and the following year was declared a nuisance and demolished.

John Randel, a draughtsman with a smattering of engineering knowledge, then suggested that an elevated rapid transit steam line be built, one track over each sidewalk in much the same way that the original elevated lines were constructed. Nothing came of his idea because of the universal opposition to marring the appearance of the city's show street with an unsightly structure.

The most fantastic scheme of all was that of the Beach Pneumatic Transit Company, incorporated in 1868, to build a barrel-shaped subway from South Ferry to Central Park, through which cars were to be propelled by an atmospheric system. A strong blast of air

from the rear, supplied by an immense blowing engine, operated by steam, was to drive them like a sloop sailing before the wind. A section of tunnel actually was constructed between Warren and Murray Streets, but it stopped there, and those who had looked forward to sailing under Broadway between their homes and business places were doomed to disappointment.

The Arcade Underground Railway then came forward with a plan to transform Broadway into a two-level street, the lower level to carry rapid transit steam trains and the upper, about one story high, to be used by pedestrians and vehicles. This concern secured the Beach Company's charter, later changed its name to the Broadway Underground Railway and waged a twenty-year fight to obtain franchise rights to build some kind of an underground road under Broadway. The Legislature once passed a bill granting the franchise, but Governor Hoffman vetoed it.

The Horse Car Era

To the Broadway buses must be given credit for the rapid development of the upper part of the avenue that occurred after 1820. They had such a hold on public favor that it was long after horse cars were running on other streets before anyone dared suggest that tracks be laid on Broadway.



Broadway at 22nd Street, 1812—Showing Buck Horn Tavern

In 1850 a company of thirty citizens was organized and in December, 1852, obtained from the Common Council a franchise to lay double tracks from South Ferry to 57th Street, with the right to extend the line from time to time along Bloomingdale Road (later

called the Boulevard and then upper Broadway) to Manhattanville. This brought about protracted litigation which continued for more than thirty years. In the meantime, the Broadway and Seventh Avenue line was constructed and in 1864 cars were run on Broadway above Union Square, continuing south through University Place at 14th Street. Buses were operated south of 14th Street, however, until 1885, when the lower Broadway franchise controversy was finally settled. Horse car operation from 57th Street to Bowling Green commenced on June 21 of that year.

Cable and Trolley

Horse cars did not last long on Broadway, for in the early nineties there arose an agitation for a more modern motive power. Accordingly, the road was changed to cable, the first cable car being run over the line in June, 1893. This proved to be a somewhat dangerous type of operation, especially on curves. So many accidents occurred at 14th Street, where the road made a sharp turn from Union Square into lower Broadway, that the point earned for itself the unsavory sobriquet of "Dead Man's Curve".

After the underground trolley had been tried out successfully on other routes it was decided to introduce it on Broadway. Installation of the system was commenced in August, 1898, and the work was not completed until the Spring of 1901, the first electrically operated car being run on May 26th. For more than a generation the underground trolley car has carried the millions of business people, shoppers, pleasure seekers and sightseers whose presence there has made Broadway the world's best known thoroughfare.

The introduction now of a service that meets the most exacting demands of twentieth century transportation ought to go a long way towards preserving for Broadway the preeminence among New York's streets that it has enjoyed for more than three hundred years.

